



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF CITIZEN COMPLAINT REVIEW**



730 11th Street, N.W., Suite 500, Washington D.C. 20001 202-727-3838

Information Sheet

What is the purpose of the Office of Citizen Complaint Review?

The OCCR was established by the District of Columbia Government to provide the public with an independent and impartial forum for the review and resolution of citizen complaints of misconduct by Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers.

The OCCR's purpose is to promote the highest attainable standard of integrity, professionalism and accountability in the District's police department. Public confidence is strengthened by ensuring that citizen complaints about police conduct are taken seriously, carefully investigated and reviewed by an experienced staff that is overseen by a Citizen Complaint Review Board appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the District Council.

What does the Office of Citizen Complaint Review do?

The OCCR has the authority to investigate, conciliate, mediate, dismiss or adjudicate a citizen complaint against a member or members of the MPD.

What is a complaint?

A complaint can be filed with the OCCR when a police officer abuses or misuses police powers. The complaint can be based on any of the following:

- Harassment
- Use of unnecessary or excessive force
- Use of language or conduct that is insulting, demeaning or humiliating
- Discriminatory treatment based upon a person's race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, physical handicap, matriculation, political affiliation, source of income, or place of residence or business
- Retaliation against a person for filing a complaint with the OCCR

The MPD will continue to handle other types of citizen complaints.

How do you make a complaint?

The most effective way to file a complaint is to come into the OCCR office. This will allow staff to interview you personally and to help you fill out the complaint form thoroughly. The OCCR

is located downtown near the Metro Center subway station, at 730 11th Street, N.W., 5th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001. Our telephone number is (202) 727-3838, and we can be reached by fax at (202) 727-9182.

Other ways that you may make a complaint:

- **By mail or fax.** Forms are available by calling the OCCR and requesting that one be sent or faxed to you. Once completed, the complaint form can be returned by mail, by fax or in person.
- **By letter.** Send us a letter detailing the incident. Please be sure to include your address and your daytime and evening telephone numbers so we may contact you for additional information, if necessary. Although complaints can be lodged via letter, you will still have to sign an official complaint form in order for us to pursue the matter.
- **By telephone.** Call the OCCR. Although complaints may be lodged over the telephone, you will still have to sign an official complaint form in order for us to pursue the matter.
- **By contacting the MPD.** All police district stations are open 24 hours a day. Police personnel are required to be courteous and to assist you.

Things to remember when making a complaint.

The following information is very important when describing the event.

- The day, date, time and exact location of the incident.
- The officer's name, badge number and physical description.
- Witnesses' names, addresses and telephone numbers.
- License numbers for any vehicles involved in the incident.
- Any other evidence you feel may be important such as copies of traffic tickets, police reports, photographs and medical records. If you have injuries, include their nature and extent.
- It is vitally important that you file your complaint as soon as possible so that, if necessary, photographs can be taken and medical records obtained quickly. Before you file your complaint, you should make a photocopy of it for your personal records.
- A complaint must be received by the OCCR within 45 days from the date of the incident.

What is the process once a complaint is made?

Once a complaint is made, you will be contacted by us and informed about the next step. We may decide to investigate your complaint. We can also attempt to settle your complaint against the officer or the complaint can be referred to an outside mediator for resolution. If settlement attempts are not successful, your complaint can be referred for investigation. After reviewing the investigative report about your complaint, we can refer your matter to a complaint examiner who can conduct a hearing, if necessary. If the complaint examiner sustains one or more of the allegations in your complaint, the matter is then referred to the Chief of Police for appropriate action. The officer charged with misconduct may then be subject to discipline if the Metropolitan Police Department agrees with the complaint examiner's decision. Although the OCCR has the authority to dismiss a complaint at any stage, we are committed to a fair and thorough review of each complaint.

